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LEADER'S GUIDE

SHELLEY & PETE . . . (& CAROL)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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HE 20.5108:

TRUE OR FALSE

T or F **1.** With all of the kinds of birth control available today, the number of teenagers who become pregnant is going way down.

T or F **2.** Teenage mothers often depend on welfare in order to survive.

T or F **3.** If a teenager drops out of school when she's pregnant, chances are good that she will eventually go back.

T or F **4.** Having a baby makes a teenager more independent.

T or F **5.** Because of their youth and high energy levels, teenage mothers usually give birth to healthier babies than do women in their 20's.

T or F **6.** Most teenage fathers marry the mother of their child.

T or F **7.** Most teenagers who become pregnant do so intentionally.

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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Health Services Administration
Bureau of Community Health Services
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TO THE LEADER . . .

This guidebook is intended for anyone who will be leading a group in the viewing of SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL). Teachers, counselors, and the staff of youth-serving organizations should find both the program and film guide useful.

SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL) is an open-ended film which lends itself to group discussion. To aid you, the leader, in focusing the group's attention on the key content points brought out in the film, this booklet suggests a number of activities and questions that you may wish to utilize with your group. Far more questions and activities are presented than you will probably want to cover at any one session. Feel free to pick and choose those activities which will best serve your group.

To assist you in using this guide, the material is divided into five sections:

- **TEENAGE PREGNANCY: FACTS AND IMPACTS**—An overview of current research on adolescent pregnancy and parenthood. This material is provided as both background information on the topic and as a springboard for subsequent group discussions.
- **PRE-VIEWING THE FILM**—Several suggestions for group activities to introduce the topic. Also included are guide questions for the viewing of the film.
- **SCENARIO**—A narrative description of SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL).
- **READING BETWEEN THE LINES**—Questions based directly on the dialogue in the film. These questions are intended as a tool for the group to use in analyzing the content presented in the film. This is the major section of the guide both in length and in importance.
- **IF I WERE SHELLEY...IF I WERE PETE**—Follow-up activities that summarize the content brought out in the discussions. These activities are especially useful as reinforcers of learnings introduced in the preceding sections.

It is hoped that the material presented in this guide will be adaptable to the needs and interests of your group and that it will increase understanding of teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY: FACTS AND IMPACTS

In the view of some, teenage pregnancy is a national epidemic of alarming proportions: "babies having babies." Others noting the greatly increased numbers of adolescents who are sexually active today, express some relief that *only* one out of ten teenage girls get pregnant each year. In either case, a teenage pregnancy is clearly an event that has considerable personal consequences and costs to individual adolescents and their families.

—*Teenage Pregnancy and Family Impact: New Perspectives on Policy, June 1979.*

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood is a topic very much in the consciousness of Americans today. National concern has been focused on this topic because of statistics like these:

- Among the world's industrialized countries, the United States has the fifth highest teenage fertility rate.
- Nearly one-fifth of all births in the United States are to teenage mothers.
- Fully one-half of all out-of-wedlock births are to teenagers.
- The birthrate to mothers under age 15 has increased 75 percent since 1960.
- Among 17-year-old women in the U.S. today, one in every 10 is already a mother, 15 percent of these women have two or more children.
- It has been predicted that one in every five 14-year-old girls will become pregnant before she leaves high school.

The significance of these figures is magnified when it is realized how potentially handicapping early parenthood can be. These facts illustrate the problem:

- **Teenage pregnancy often poses a health risk for the mother-to-be.** Because most adolescents are not biologically mature before age 18, those who become pregnant at an earlier age often face increased health risks. For the young mother, there is a strong possibility that during pregnancy she will suffer from toxemia, iron-deficiency anemia, and other complications.
- **Babies born to teenage mothers are often at risk medically.** Early childbearing is positively associated with physical and neurological handicaps in children. Moreover, the risks of a baby being stillborn or dying within the first year of life are

nearly double for the children of adolescent mothers as compared to the children of women in their twenties.

- **Parenthood often cuts short the adolescent parent's education.** Among teenage girls, pregnancy and parenthood are the leading causes of school dropout. Statistically, 8 out of 10 girls who become pregnant at age 17 or younger will never complete high school. Similarly, the educational plans of teenage fathers are also affected by parenthood. Even in those instances in which the mother has primary responsibility for the child, it is likely that the father will leave school in an effort to contribute to the child's support.

- **Employment possibilities for teenage parents are limited.** Without a high school diploma, teenage parents often find that job opportunities are not readily available. Studies point out that teenage mothers who do find work are significantly less satisfied with their jobs than are comparable groups of non-parents. Likewise, research confirms that teenage fathers are likely to have unskilled, low-paying jobs with little benefit of job security or an opportunity for advancement.

- **Teenage marriages are often short-lived.** Even though the majority of teenage parents do initially marry, these marriages are not usually stable; two-thirds of teenage marriages end in divorce within 5 years. For those marriages in which the bride is 16 or under, 80 percent end in divorce.

- **Early childbearing puts added emotional stress on adolescent parents.** For the teenager who is suddenly thrust into the role of parent, psychological strain is almost always experienced. Nine percent of teenage mothers attempt suicide—a figure which is seven times the national average for that age group. Fathers, likewise, are prone to depression. Because attention is automatically focused on the teenage mother, the father's needs are often ignored by his family and society at large.

- **The emotional stress of early childbearing is frequently taken out on children.** The incidence of child abuse and neglect among adolescent parents is strikingly higher than for older parents. Trapped in a situation over which they feel they have no control, many teenage parents take out their anger and frustration on their children.

- **The costs of teenage pregnancy and parenthood are borne by all of society.** Because taxpayers underwrite many of the services needed by the adolescent parent, the economic costs of early childbearing are shared by all of us. In dollar amounts, it has been estimated that the 442,000 births that occured to teenagers in 1976 will cost the American taxpayer some $8.3 billion in welfare and medical costs alone. Thus, the currently estimated 600,000 annual births to teenage women will produce massive costs for the Federal, state, and local governments.

The statistical portrait of teenage parenthood illustrates how potentially damaging early childbearing can be to the teenager's social, emotional, and physical well-being. **IT SHOULD BE UNDERSCORED, THOUGH, THAT NOT ALL TEENAGE PARENTS ARE FOREDOOMED TO EXPERIENCE THESE NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS.** For example, the teenage mother-to-be who obtains prenatal care and eats a balanced diet helps to reduce the medical risks to both herself and her child. In the same vein, teenage parents who are able to avail themselves of educational opportunities and job training programs can many times break the cycle of poverty which typically entraps adolescent parents. Likewise, teenagers who receive support from their families—be it emotional or financial—can oftentimes reverse the predicted life pattern associated with adolescent parenthood.

The point to remember is that being a teenage parent does not automatically condemn one to a life of strain, frustration, and unhappiness. Teenage parents--like parents of every age--have the opportunity to experience the joys of parenthood and to reap the rewards of childrearing. The difference is that for the teenage parent, the obstacles to overcome are many and the challenges are great. SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL) tells the story of one young couple's efforts to face these challenges.

PRE-VIEWING THE FILM

To introduce the topic, try one or more of these suggestions:

1. Ask the group to individually complete the TRUE or FALSE test which appears on the inside cover of this booklet. Have the class discuss their opinions as a group before giving them the answers. After reviewing the answers, continue the discussion to see where and why their answers might have differed from the facts.

2. Lead the group in a discussion of this question:

   If you were to find out today that you are going to become a parent six months from now, how do you think that your life would change?

   Try to focus the group's attention on some of these areas of concern which would be affected by the birth of a baby:

   - schooling
   - job/career plans

- marital status
- personal development
- travel plans
- personal freedom
- financial responsibilities
- relationships with parents and other family members.

3. Have the group discuss the following topic:
   Is being a teenage parent different from becoming a parent for the first time when you're in your 20's? Your 30's? Your 40's?

   In discussing this issue, help the group to bring out these points:

   - The teenager's lack of experience in dealing with the day-to-day problems associated with child-rearing;
   - The probability that the teenage parent may have to seek welfare assistance;
   - The increased likelihood of pregnancy-related health problems for the teenage mother and her child, especially if the mother is under 18;
   - The high probability that the teenage parent did not intentionally plan on having a child; and,
   - The probability that the teenage parent has had to alter his/her educational and career goals because of the baby.

* * * * *

To introduce the film, ask the group to think about these questions as they are watching SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL):

- How did Carol change Shelley and Pete's lives?
- How did Shelley and Pete alter their plans for the future, both as individuals and as a couple?

SCENARIO

THE CHARACTERS:

- Shelley Selden McSpadden - a 16-year-old high school junior
- Pete McSpadden - a 17-year-old high school senior; Shelley's boyfriend and later, her husband
- Mr. and Mrs. Selden - Shelley's parents
- Martha Selden - Shelley's younger sister
- Pop McSpadden - Pete's dad
- Nancy, Ruth, Debby, Anya, and Wendy - Shelley's friends
- Donnelle - Captain of the cheerleaders; later, mother of Melanie
- Jeremiah - Donnelle's boyfriend, later, father of Melanie
- Cal - Pete's good friend
- Carol - Shelley and Pete's baby

THE STORY

Shelley Selden, an alternate cheerleader on the Spencer High squad, is dejected because Donnelle chooses someone else to fill a vacant slot on the cheerleading team. When Pete, who is in the stands watching the game, sees that Shelley isn't on the squad, he goes to find her.

Pete and Shelley are next seen at the docks where Pete keeps his beloved boat, Crazy Horse. While the two are putting a name plate on the boat, Pete excitedly discusses his plan to sail away to Barbados and other points South immediately after high school graduation. When Shelley becomes depressed at the thought of Pete sailing out of her life, Pete consoles her.

This consolation of Shelley continues inside a deserted warehouse near the docks. Shelley interrupts Pete in the middle of an intimate embrace, though, to make sure that he is using birth control. Pete begrudgingly agrees, stating that "It's like taking a shower with your raincoat on." The two tenderly kiss.

Pete is next viewed at his father's drycleaning store working at a press. He complains to his dad about the old machinery they have to use.

In the meantime, Shelley and her girlfriend Nancy are driving through town picking up groceries for an upcoming slumber party. Nancy laments the fact that the two girls never see each other anymore now that Shelley is so involved with Pete. Nancy cautions Shelley in her plan to sneak away from the slumber party so that she can spend the night with Pete.

At the drycleaning store, Mr. McSpadden invites Pete and his friend Cal over for dinner. The boys decline, making an excuse that they are going to spend the night aboard the Crazy Horse.

That night, at the slumber party, the girls are engrossed in a discussion of sex and birth control. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Nancy and Shelley. As soon as the girls enter, Shelley's friends greet her with the news that she is now a member of the cheerleading squad since Donnelle has left school. Enthusiastically, Shelley runs to call her mother to tell her the good news. When she casually inquires of her friends why Donnelle left, she is informed that it's because she has gotten pregnant.

Later that evening when Shelley is with Pete, they discuss Donnelle's pregnancy. Pete reassures Shelley that the same thing won't happen to them, telling her that "We're almost always careful."

Some time later, Shelley and her mother are seen at the Selden home talking and hemming Shelley's cheerleading skirt. In their discussion of the coming year, Mrs. Selden tells Shelley how much she has to look forward to. With Pete away, she will have time for both gymnastics and cheerleading.

Pete and Shelley are viewed together going on a date, meeting at school, and working on Crazy Horse at the docks. Their love for each other is very much apparent. When Nancy asks Shelley, though, if she and Pete have plans to get married, Shelley tells her that they're still too young.

On another day, Pete is seen at the docks busily working on Crazy Horse, while Shelley makes a phone call. As she hangs up the receiver, she appears frightened and stunned.

The next time Shelley and Pete are seen it is at a family conference that has been called at the Selden home. Gradually, it becomes evident that the family members have

been gathered together to discuss what they should do about Shelley's pregnancy. Shelley's parents want her to have an abortion. Mr. McSpadden prefers that Shelley go to a home for unwed mothers and give the child up for adoption. Pete says nothing throughout the discussion, but Shelley vehemently proclaims that she is going to have this baby and keep it. When she runs from the room in tears, Pete comforts her and assures her that he will stand by her.

Shelley is next seen many months later at home in her sparse apartment attending to her baby, Carol. Shelley is a loving mother; yet, the tedium of having to constantly respond to the baby's needs is visible. Pete too looks dispirited as he works on Crazy Horse.

When Pete comes back from the docks, Shelley suggests that they go out for the evening. Pete protests that they have no money. The two argue and Pete exits abruptly.

One day at the store, Mr. McSpadden offers Pete an opportunity to buy into the business with him. When he suggests that Pete sell Crazy Horse to finance the venture, Pete resists. Later that day when Pete tells Shelley of his father's offer, she is delighted and fantasizes of all the things that they will be able to do. Pete, though, firmly insists that he has no intention of accepting his father's offer.

Sometime later, while at the laundromat, Shelley encounters Donnelle and her baby, Melanie. The two women discuss their circumstances. When they finish their laundry, they continue their chat while taking a walk.

In the meantime, Pete and Cal are seen talking together. Pete tells Cal that he needs his help if they are ever going to realize their sailing adventure.

While walking together, Donnelle tells Shelley that she is intent on going back to school next semester. Without a high school diploma, she knows that her chances of getting a job are slim. When Shelley expresses her desire to return to school as well, Donnelle encourages her to go to Spencer High to check out the possibility of returning to school.

Pete and Cal are again seen conversing while playing pinball. Pete expresses his dissatisfaction with his life to Cal. An obviously dejected Pete is then seen at the docks where he reluctantly sells Crazy Horse to the old man who had long admired the boat.

At the school, Shelley and Carol make their way to the gym. While Shelley is practicing on the balance beam and talking to Carol, she is interrupted by the cheerleaders coming in for practice. Shelley sees her old friend Nancy, who is herself now a member of the squad. Shelley eagerly asks Nancy to go out for a soda so that the two girls can renew their friendship. Nancy gently rebuffs Shelley, telling her that she needs to go to the practice. Hurt and angry, Shelley leaves the gym and momentarily vents her frustration on Carol, telling her that "It's all your fault."

After her adventure at the school, Shelley eagerly awaits Pete's arrival so that she can discuss her plans for returning to school with his help. As she is putting on make-up, she is interrupted by a knock on the door which she assumes to be Pete. Her elation soon disappears, though, when she realizes that it is Cal at the door, not Pete. When Cal hands her an envelope full of money from Pete, Shelley realizes that Pete has left town.

Shelley immediately takes Carol with her in the car and frantically searches for Pete. After some time, she spies Pete along the road, thumbing a ride. She stops the car and the two are left facing each other...

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

To find out how well the group understands the content presented in the film, ask the class to discuss their feelings about the questions presented below. For each group of questions, the dialogue lines upon which the questions are based are provided. Some suggested answers to the questions appear in the COMMENTS section.

To present the questions to the group, you may wish to run the film to the point in the story at which the dialogue being discussed is spoken. The projector can then be stopped while the class discusses the implications of the spoken dialogue.

1. While at a slumber party, one of the girls interrupts a discussion on birth control with this comment:

ANYA: YOU ACT LIKE SEX IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE TO DO.

- Do you think that Anya is the only one in her group to value being a virgin?
- Why do you think that Anya abstains from sex? Is it because of moral beliefs? Because she thinks that she is too young? That she wants to wait for marriage? That she hasn't yet met someone with whom she would like to have sex? Or, is she as Ruth accuses her, a "professional virgin?"
- Do you think that there is a lot of peer pressure on Anya and the others to have sex? What is Ruth implying when she calls Anya a professional virgin?
- Do you think that Anya's friends respect her for taking this stand?

COMMENTS:

While we do not have any insight as to how many girls in this group of friends are having sex, it appears that Anya's position is in the minority. Ruth and several other girls in the group seem to be quite experienced in this area, or at least, wish to convey this impression to the others.

From their conversation, it appears that there is a great deal of peer pressure being exerted on Anya and the other girls to have sex. Ruth, in particular, attempts to ridicule Anya for her "prudish" stance. We can infer, however, that the peer pressure to engage in sex is not unyieldingly strong. Otherwise, Anya would not have felt free to state her position. The fact tnat another friend stood up to Ruth for Anya shows respect for both Anya and her views.

We do not know, of course, what motivates Anya, and others in the group who may be less vocal supporters of abstinence, to wish to remain virgins. Their commitment may be rooted in any number oï reasons from fear of pregnancy to moral beliefs. Anya does, though, feel strong in her conviction that a teenager has the right to remain abstinent if he or she should so choose.

2. Shaken up by the news of Donnelle's pregnancy, Shelley expresses her fears to Pete. He comforts her in this way:

   PETE: BUT YOU'RE NOT DONNELLE. AND WE'RE ALMOST ALWAYS CAREFUL.

   - Why does Pete feel that he and Shelley are so different from Donnelle and Jeremiah? Does he think that "almost always" being careful puts the odds in their favor?
   - Do you think that Pete is giving Shelley a line? Do you think that he really believes that it couldn't happen to them?
   - Did Donnelle's experience make Shelley and Pete behave any differently in regard to their use of birth control?

COMMENTS:

It is, of course, impossible to know what Pete's thinking was at the time that this was said to Shelley. He may have actually believed what he said or he may have been trying to break down Shelley's defenses. Because of the long-standing relationship between the two and the mutual respect they seem to share, it does not seem likely that Pete was trying to take advantage of Shelley by "giving her a line." Yet, it is possible that, in a moment of passion, he might have stretched the truth in order to convince Shelley to make love with him.

From the interactions that we have seen between Pete and Shelley, the most obvious conclusion is that neither one truly understands the principles of birth control. By being careful most of the time, they seem to think that the odds are in their favor that Shelley won't get pregnant. They probably envision Donnelle as one who did not take the precautions they do. Yet, the concept of "almost always" does not apply to birth control. A couple either does or does not practice birth control. On those instances on which they were not "careful", Shelley and Pete were not, in fact, practicing birth control.

3. Still disturbed by the fact that Donnelle became pregnant, Shelley asks Pete what he would do should the same thing happen to them:

SHELLEY: WHAT IF IT HAPPENS TO US?
PETE: WE'LL NAME IT AFTER ME, NO SWEAT.

- What do Pete and Shelley see as the consequences of Shelley becoming pregnant?
- Do Pete and Shelley take a possible pregnancy lightly? Do they take marriage lightly? Or, is Pete just giving Shelley a line?
- Do you think that Pete and Shelley can picture themselves as parents-to-be?

COMMENTS:

Again, Shelley and Pete's motivations can only be guessed at from what we know about them as characters. Pete may be leading Shelley on somewhat: by calming her down and addressing her fears, he is ensuring that she will be a willing sex partner. Yet, the tenderness between the two indicates that Pete is trying not so much to use Shelley as to deal with what he believes to be a "what if" situation that will never happen. As we have seen, Pete and Shelley believe that they are practicing sound birth control techniques. Therefore, the possibility of Shelley becoming pregnant does not seem very real to Pete. He can say whatever Shelley wants to hear, since he does not believe that such a circumstance will ever occur.

Pete may, on the other hand, be perfectly sincere in his offer, since as we have seen, he does in fact marry Shelley when she becomes pregnant. The focus of their conversation, though, leads one to believe that pregnancy and parenthood are very distant concerns. While they realize that pregnancy is a possible outcome of their lovemaking, they do not seem to believe that it is a likely one for them. Therefore, the impact of pregnancy and parenthood are never really dealt with by this couple.

4. At a family conference convened to decide what to do about Shelley's "problem," Shelley reacts to the adults' plans by shouting:

SHELLEY: THIS IS OUR BABY...MY BABY...AND I'M GOING TO HAVE IT WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!

- Do you think that Shelley has thought seriously about this decision? Or is she just reacting to her parents and Mr. McSpadden?
- Do you think that Shelley has discussed her plans with Pete? Do you think that she wants to have the baby as a leverage to keep Pete from leaving town and to get him to marry her?
- Why do you think that Shelley has rejected abortion and adoption as options?

COMMENTS:

It is difficult to know what has brought Shelley to this point. As we have not been privy to Shelley's conversations with Pete, we do not know to what extent Shelley's plans are a joint decision. Shelley does say, however, that she and Pete have talked a lot about the subject, so we can infer that he is at least aware of her plans. We do know, too, that in an earlier conversation Pete assured Shelley that if she became pregnant, they could name the baby after him. While this comment was probably spoken more as an inducement to get Shelley to make love to him than as an indication of his eagerness to become a father, it is nonetheless, a sign of Pete's commitment to Shelley.

Whether or not Shelley has explored the options available to her and has made a rational decision based upon facts is likewise unknown. We have no knowledge of Shelley having talked to her doctor, a school counselor, a religious leader, a social worker, or even any friends about her pregnancy. Moreover, if Shelley has done any reading on the matter or seen any films on the subject is also unknown. All of these factors which would have influenced her decision can only be guessed at from Shelley's behavior.

From the scene with her parents and Pete's family, it does seem, though, that Shelley is reacting somewhat emotionally and impulsively. We get the impression that Shelley is rebelling against the adults who are trying to control both her and her baby's life.

In any case, whether her decision has been based on a logical weighing of pros and cons or whether it is merely an emotional reaction, Shelley appears to be adamant in her determination to have the baby.

5. When Pete rebuffs her request to go out for the evening, Shelley complains to her husband:

SHELLEY: I'M TIRED OF STAYING HOME ALL OF THE TIME AND WATCHING TELEVISION.

- Why doesn't Shelley get out more? Is it because she and Pete don't have any money to spend on entertainment? Are there things they could do together that don't cost money?
- Is Shelley more tied down to the apartment than is Pete? Is Carol truly a 24 hour-a-day responsibility?
- Do you think that Shelley's life is as monotonous as she makes it sound?
- If Shelley and Pete worked at it together, could they improve the situation?

COMMENTS:

There is a definite likelihood that Shelley's existence may, in fact, be as monotonous as she describes it. The caretaking responsibilities of raising an infant are constant and round-the-clock. Moreover, because Pete is gone during the day,

Shelley has primary responsibility for taking care of both Carol and their apartment. With her friends at school and her parents and husband at work during the day, she is isolated in the apartment. This lifestyle is an abrupt change from the freedom that Shelley once enjoyed.

Even with their limited financial resources, there might be some relief for Shelley if she and Pete attacked this problem together. One solution might be to hire a babysitter for a few hours a week just so Shelley could get out of the apartment for awhile. Or, Shelley might find some other parents with whom she could form a babysitting cooperative. As it is now, though, Pete and Shelley are not likely to try to solve their problems together, since parenthood seems to be pulling them in different directions.

6. During an argument with Shelley, Pete exits. Shelley is left mid-sentence yelling at his back:

   SHELLEY: PETE! PETE! THIS IS IMPORTANT TO ME. JUST...

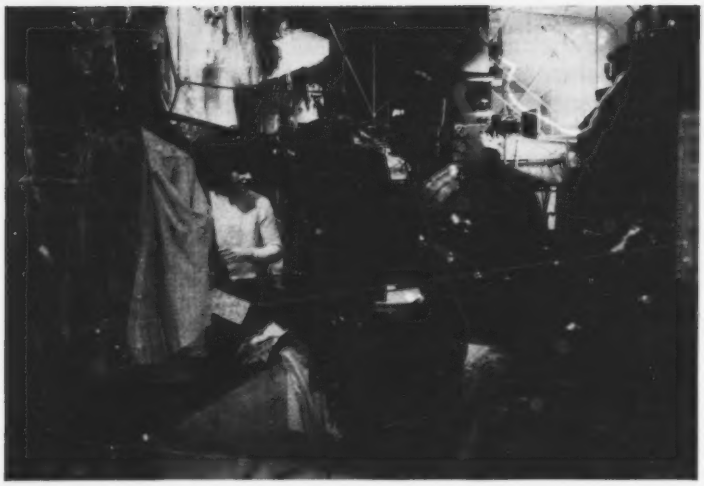
   - Why does Pete leave without listening to Shelley? Does Pete care about Shelley's feelings?
   - Do you think that this reaction is typical of Pete's way of dealing with Shelley's unhappiness?
   - If this pattern continues, what effect do you think that it will have on Pete and Shelley's marriage?

COMMENTS:

This scene seems to typify the way in which Shelley and Pete's relationship has deteriorated: Shelley yells her complaints at Pete and he turns his back on her without hearing her out. As it appears here, it is as though Shelley and Pete are leading separate lives even while they are living together. Such a pattern of non-communication cannot bode well for their marriage.

7. While working together at the store, Mr. McSpadden explains to Pete why he is offering his son a share of the business:

   MR. MCSPADDEN: IT'S FOR YOU. IT'S FOR SHELLEY. IT'S FOR THE BABY. I'M GOING TO HELP SET YOU UP, PETE.



- Is Pete appreciative of his father's offer?
- How would things be for Pete and Shelley if Mr. McSpadden were not there to help them out financially? Would they be able to survive? Would Shelley have to go to work? What would happen to Carol?
- Do you think that other couples in Pete and Shelley's position are as fortunate as they are to have parental assistance?

COMMENTS:

It seems likely that Pete appreciates his father's offer, although he may not be able to verbalize his feelings. It appears that Pete has always been close to his dad and that he welcomes his counsel and support. At the same time, though, he probably feels that his father is a part of the forces that are pressuring him to settle down and forget his sailing plans.

Mr. McSpadden's offer to make Pete a partner, plus his past assistance, have obviously done much to contribute to Pete and Shelley's welfare. Unlike many teenage husbands, Pete has not had to face the prospects of unemployment or a job that does not pay enough to support a family.

While Pete and Shelley are far from well-off financially, their situation would have been much worse had not Mr. McSpadden been there to help.

8. When Pete turns down his father's offer, Mr. McSpadden chides his son:

   MR. MCSPADDEN: YOU'RE NOT A KID IN THE BACK OF THE STORE, PETE. YOU'RE A MAN. YOU PULL YOUR OWN WEIGHT.

   - Why does Mr. McSpadden think that Pete needs to be reminded of his responsibilities? Do you think that Mr. McSpadden fears that Pete is incapable of assuming his responsibilities?
   - Do you think that Pete is capable of being responsible for his family?
   - Does Pete want to be responsible?

COMMENTS:

Pete has obviously had a lot of responsibility thrown on his shoulders rather abruptly. He has, without much time for preparation, transformed from a free-wheeling high school senior about to embark on a sailing adventure, to a husband and father responsible for supporting his family. While such a transition is never easy, it seems to be an especially difficult situation for Pete to accept emotionally.

Mr. McSpadden appears to think it is time that Pete gave up his dreams and took a foothold on reality. He doesn't seem to doubt Pete's ability to be a good provider, only his desire to make a full commitment towards this role. Pete, in all probability, is aware of his ambivalence and is wrestling with the question of which direction his life should take.

9. After Mr. McSpadden offers Pete a share in the business, he explains to his son how Pete could finance his portion of the costs:

   MR. MCSPADDEN: YOU KNOW YOU CAN GET A GOOD PENNY FOR THAT FLOATING BARN OF YOURS.

   - Why does Mr. McSpadden want Pete to sell Crazy Horse? Why does Shelley want Pete to sell the boat?

- Why is Pete so resistant to giving up the boat? What does Crazy Horse symbolize to Pete?
- If he sells the boat, do you think that he would be able to get another boat in the future?

COMMENTS:

Crazy Horse symbolizes Pete's freedom. When he was in high school and so eagerly anticipating taking off in his boat, Pete felt that he had the whole world ahead of him. Now that he is married and the father of a child, he feels trapped in a situation from which there is no escaping.

Both Shelley and his dad want him to sell the boat and use the money to secure him in business. In Pete's mind, though, to sell the boat is synonymous with selling out on his dreams. To give up Crazy Horse would be to acknowledge the end of his freedom and his youth and the death of his dream.

10. In reaction to Pete's rejection of his father's business offer, Shelley blurts this out:

SHELLEY: DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IF WE HAD A LITTLE MORE MONEY THINGS WOULD BE A LOT BETTER AROUND HERE.

- Is Pete being insensitive to Shelley? Do you think that he shares her concern about their financial situation?
- Do you think that money is the real issue that Pete and Shelley are fighting about? Or does it symbolize a number of other problems? If money weren't a problem, would Shelley and Pete still be having difficulties?

COMMENTS:

Most assuredly, money is a very real worry for both Shelley and Pete. A new baby is a tremendous financial drain on any family. For not only must Pete and Shelley provide for the family's daily existence, but they must also plan for future needs. With only one breadwinner in the family, their money is indeed limited.

The hardships of a limited income are probably aggravated for Shelley and Pete because this is the first time that they have been responsible for supporting themselves. Even though Pete helped his father with the business while he was in school, he did not have to depend solely upon himself financially. Thus, being thrust into this position so abruptly has put an added burden on the couple. Moreover, neither likes being deprived of things that were always taken for granted, such as having enough money to go out for a movie or a dinner.

Obviously, their argument over money isn't the only problem facing the couple. It is also possible that money symbolizes many of the more intangible problems in their marriage that they are unable to discuss. It is clear, though, that finances are a serious problem to Shelley and Pete and that it aggravates the pressures of parenthood.

11. Upon his arrival home to a renewed argument with Shelley, Pete accusingly yells at her:

PETE: LOOK AT THIS PLACE! LOOK AT YOU!

- Why is Pete so upset?
- Would he be happier if Shelley took better care of herself? If the place were neater?
- Do you think that Pete is being fair in his criticism of Shelley?

COMMENTS:

Pete's tirade symbolizes his overall state of mind. Resentful of having been pushed into being both a husband and a father, he is consumed with frustration. As a result, Pete is taking out his unhappiness on Shelley, demeaning both her capabilities as a wife and as a person. This attack on Shelley was probably not meant to be as personal as it became. Pete, like so many people, vents his frustration on the one with whom he is closest. In this case, Shelley must bear the burden of his unhappiness.

12. In the midst of a heated argument over whether or not Pete should accept his father's offer, Pete yells at Shelley:

PETE: YOU WANT ME TO SELL MY LAST CHANCE TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

- Does Pete look at Crazy Horse as an adventure or as an escape from Shelley and Carol?
- Do you think that Pete really wants to get out of his marriage?
- What do you think the chances for success are for this marriage?

COMMENTS:

To Pete, Crazy Horse was originally a symbol of his hopes and dreams—a chance to be free and to do what he wanted whenever he wanted. Now, though, with all of the pressures of family that surround him, he sees the Crazy Horse as his last chance for happiness.

Pete is obviously not comfortable or happy in his newfound role of husband and father. While he surely feels affection toward both Shelley and Carol, he is, nonetheless, upset over having to take on such serious responsibilities before he has had a chance to fulfill his dreams. This resentment which is welling up within Pete cannot bode well for his relationship with Shelley. No one can predict whether or not this marriage will endure; we can infer, though, that unless Pete becomes more fully committed to his marriage and his family, that the relationship will continue to be turbulent.

13. After more than a year's absence, Shelley meets Donnelle at the laundromat and inquires about her boyfriend:

SHELLEY: HOW'S JEREMIAH?

DONNELLE: OH, THINGS DIDN'T QUITE WORK OUT. HE SPLIT A LONG TIME AGO.

- How do you think Jeremiah's leaving has affected Donnelle? How has it affected Melanie?
- In what ways is Donnelle's situation different from Shelley's? In what ways is it the same?
- As a single parent, do you think that Donnelle has had a harder time coping than has Shelley?

COMMENTS:

With Jeremiah no longer in the picture, Donnelle must assume total responsibility for her child. Not only does this mean that she must provide emotional and financial support for Melanie, but it also means that she does not have any support herself from the baby's father. Even if Jeremiah had not married Donnelle but had wished to remain a part of her life, he might have been able to provide her and the baby with some form of assistance, be it psychological or monetary.

Like Donnelle, Shelley may, at times, feel alone—that Pete is not much of a help with the baby. Yet, Pete does provide for Shelley and Carol financially and is, at times, able to provide Shelley with emotional support. Moreover, his love for Carol is evident. In addition, because Shelley and Pete are married, Shelley does not have to deal with the same social pressures which confront Donnelle as a single parent.

14. While hanging out with his friend Cal, Pete complains aloud:

PETE: THIS PLACE STINKS.

- What is really bothering Pete? Is it the town? Is it his marriage? Is it having to give up his sailing dream?
- What can Pete do to make himself happier?

COMMENTS:

Pete's comment reflects his overall frustration with his

life. He is feeling trapped by Shelley, by Carol, and by all of the circumstances which have pushed him into early fatherhood.

Pete's bitterness over having to abandon his plans for a sailing adventure after graduation is contributing to his malaise. It is likely that it is not Shelley, Carol, nor the town that is upsetting him—it is the direction that his life has taken which so bothers him. Together they represent his shattered dreams.

It is also clear that unless Pete takes action to improve his situation, he will continue to brood over his lot. As it is now, his resentment towards everyone and everything in his life is growing.

15. While walking together, Donnelle tells Shelley of her plans for going back to school:

SHELLEY: ARE YOU REALLY GOING BACK TO SCHOOL, DONNELLE?

DONNELLE: I'VE GOT TO, GIRL. NOBODY'S GOING TO HIRE ME IF I DON'T HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA TO WAVE IN THEIR FACE.

- Do you agree with Donnelle's reasoning? Is it impossible to get a job without first finishing high school?
- As a single parent, would it make more sense for Donnelle to try to find a job right now without wasting time in school?
- How does Donnelle's motivation for returning to school differ from Shelley's?

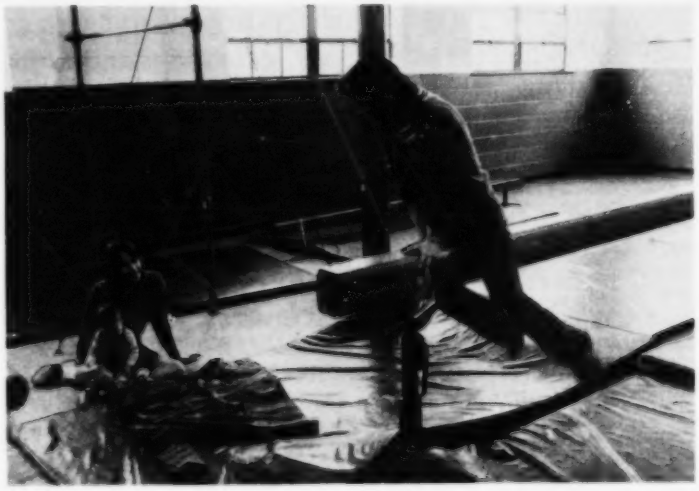
COMMENTS:

Donnelle's assessment of the situation is supported by facts. In order to obtain a decent-paying job that will offer her some amount of job security, she does in fact need her diploma. While obtaining work right now would help her situation temporarily, in the long run, she would be worse off. Research studies have confirmed what Donnelle instinctively knows to be true—a high school education is important to future success.

While Donnelle's motivation for returning to school is a pragmatic choice based on economic reasoning, Shelley's motives are much more emotional. She wants to return to school to retrieve a time when she was happy, surrounded by friends, and beloved by Pete. Still, it should be noted that as different as these motives are, they may achieve the same end for both Donnelle and Shelley—a high school education. Without realizing it now, if Shelley goes back to school, she will perhaps be able to secure the same economic future for herself that Donnelle recognizes as so vital.

16. While practicing on the balance beam at the school gym, Shelley speaks this wish aloud to Carol:

SHELLEY: MAYBE YOU'LL MAKE THE OLYMPIC TEAM SOMEDAY, CUKA. WOULDN'T YOU LIKE THAT? THEN YOU CAN GO ON TO THE OLYMPICS AND WIN A GOLD MEDAL FOR YOUR MOMMY.



- Are Shelley's thoughts like every mother's hopes for her child?
- Or, is Shelley starting to live vicariously through her

child? Do you think that Shelley thought that she herself might have been able to make the Olympics had she stuck with her gymnastics?

- Do you think that Shelley feels that she has let her parents down by not achieving more? Has she let herself down by not having achieved more?

COMMENTS:

In many respects Shelley's wish for Carol is like every mother's wish for her child: all parents want their children to be successful. Shelley's wish, though, may be tinged with some sense of regret about her own future. When she was in school and taking gymnastics, her teachers predicted a bright future for her. Now, all that is behind her. Since she has had Carol, there has been neither time nor opportunity for Shelley to pursue the sport. It is quite likely that Shelley regrets having had to cut her gymnastics career short and may even resent having done so. It is likely, too, that Shelley hopes that her daughter will make her prouder than she has made her own mother. Shelley may be experiencing some residual guilt over the fact that she became pregnant and, in a sense, let her parents down.

17. After a year's absence, Nancy and Shelley encounter each other in the school gymnasium. Shelley tries to bridge the gap:

SHELLEY: HEY, WANT TO COME FOR A SODA OR ICE CREAM OR SOMETHING?

NANCY: WELL, I'VE GOT TO PRACTICE. BUT YOU CAN WATCH.

- Why did Nancy turn down Shelley's invitation? Did she really have to practice? Why didn't she set up another time to get together?
- What do you think the chances are that the girls will renew their friendship at a later date?
- Could Nancy really have been a close friend of Shelley's if they lost touch so easily?
- Why has Pete remained closer to Cal than Shelley has to her girlfriends?

COMMENTS:

Most likely, Shelley and Nancy have lost touch with each other because their lives have gone in different directions. Nancy, who is still in school and is now a cheerleader, has the same interests that Shelley had while she was in school. Shelley, though, is now a wife and mother and, by necessity, has a wholly different set of priorities. Taking care of her baby, keeping house, and pleasing her husband have taken the place of slumber parties and cheerleading.

In all probability, Nancy senses the different course that she and Shelley have taken and feels that they are in different worlds. While the two girls may once again get together, it is not likely that they will be the close friends that they once were when they shared so much in common. The drifting away from each other that Nancy first sensed when Shelley began to see so much of Pete, has now probably severed the girls' friendship, at least until such time as they have more in common.

Pete, on the other hand, has been able to maintain his friendship with Cal. While, like Nancy and Shelley, their lives have gone in different directions, it does not appear to have affected their friendship. This may be because of their personalities or the closeness of their original bond. Or, it may be attributed to the fact that teenage parenthood does not as drastically affect the father's life as it does the mother's. Whereas Shelley is tied down to Carol and the apartment, Pete is still able to get out and to pursue many of the same interests that he had before he became a father.

18. Hurt and angry because Nancy rebuffed her overtures at renewing their friendship, Shelley yells at Carol:

SHELLEY: SEE WHAT YOU DID, CUKA? IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.

- Why did Shelley yell at Carol?
- Was she mad at the baby? At her friends? At herself?
- Do you think that Shelley blames Carol for all of her problems? Is it the baby's fault that Shelley's no longer in school? That she's been rejected by her friends? That Pete's affection towards Shelley has diminished?
- Do you think that such outbursts occur on a regular

basis? Do you think that Shelley might feel like hurting Carol during a moment of extreme frustration?

COMMENTS:

Shelley is feeling extreme pressure from all sides. On the one hand, she is trying very hard to be a good mother to Carol and a loving wife to Pete. Yet, things aren't going according to her plans. She longs, on the other hand, for the days when she was in high school and held a coveted position on the cheerleading team. When she tries to recapture these days for a moment while practicing on the balance beam at the school gym, she is jolted into reality by her former squadmates. Their rejection deeply hurts Shelley who, in turn, vents her anger on Carol.

In all probability, Shelley is not upset with Carol, only at the situation. It is difficult for her to accept that she is no longer a popular member of her peer group. As a mother, she is no longer free to do the same things which only a year ago had consumed her life. It is not difficult to understand why during moments of frustration and anxiety Shelley may momentarily take out her feelings on her baby.

19. After an outburst of frustration at being rejected by her former friend Nancy, Shelley apologizes to Carol with this explanation:

SHELLEY: I'M SORRY HONEY. IT'S JUST THAT I WANT TO COME BACK SO BADLY.

- Why do you think Shelley wants to return to school so badly?
- Does Shelley want to get back to school to renew old friendships? Or is it a desire to recapture a time when she was happier and free of responsibilities?
- Does she miss the intellectual challenges of school?
- Does Shelley feel, like Donnelle, that without a high school diploma that she will never be able to get anywhere?

COMMENTS:

Shelley's desire to return to school is probably motivated by many factors, rather than any one particular reason. We

do know, though, that Shelley looks back on her school days nostalgically. They were a time when she was popular, had fun, and looked forward to a still uncharted future. Now she sees her life as routine and unfulfilling. Moreover, as a mother at home with her child, it is difficult for her to make new friends. It is no wonder that Shelley yearns to recapture the carefree existence she had before she had to assume the responsibilities of being a wife and mother.

From Shelley's actions, it is difficult to sense if she realizes the importance of returning to school as a key to future success. Nor does the loss of intellectual stimulation seem to be a motivating factor. While with the passage of time these factors might become more important, for right now Shelley's desire to return to school is primarily an emotional response.

20. As Shelley eagerly awaits Pete's return home, she puts on make-up and tells Carol of her plans:

SHELLEY: MOMMY WANTS TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL. DADDY REALLY LOVED MOMMY WHEN SHE WAS IN SCHOOL.

- Do you think that Shelley is looking to school as a

panacea to her problems?

- If she returns to school, do you think that she will be as happy as she was before? How do you think that she will feel if she finds that all of her friends are cheerleaders and she is unable to be one? What if her former friends snub her?
- Will returning to school improve Shelley's relationship with Pete?

COMMENTS:

It appears that Shelley's desire to return to school is more of an emotional impulse than a realistic plan. It is likely that returning to school represents, for Shelley, a way of retrieving her past happiness. When she was in school, she and Pete were in love and the world was theirs. Now, much of the joy and excitement that she experienced daily have disappeared from her life. While she most assuredly loves both Pete and Carol, returning to school symbolizes for Shelley a return to a happier time.

While it is impossible to predict what would happen if Shelley returned to school, it does not seem likely that the experience will be able to live up to her expectations. Shelley is no longer the carefree teenager she once was. Carol's birth has permanently set Shelley apart from her classmates in terms of experience and social situation.

It is possible, though, that if by returning to school Shelley felt happier about her life and herself, that her increased happiness would positively affect her relationship with Pete. As it is now, though, she is setting expectations upon returning to school that will be nearly impossible to realize.

IF I WERE SHELLEY . . . IF I WERE PETE

The activities that follow will help the class to relate their own experiences and backgrounds to the lives of the characters viewed in the film. These exercises are intended to be culminating activities in which the group can apply what they have learned from the film and the preceding activities in this guide.

* * *

1. Have the class pick out the key decision points in the film and discuss what they would have done differently and what they would have done the same had they been Shelley or Pete. The points of discussion could include the following decisions:
   - Whether to be "always careful" or "almost always careful" in using birth control.
   - What to do when Shelley got pregnant.
   - Who should go to work and who should stay at home with the baby.
   - What eduational plans should be made.
   - Whether or not to accept Pop McSpadden's offer.
   - Whether to sell or keep the Crazy Horse.
2. Select members of the group to role play some of the key scenes in the film as they would have reacted had they

been Shelley, Pete, the Seldens, or Mr. McSpadden. To do this, you might wish to play back the film to a given scene and then stop the action so that members of the group can take over. Some of the scenes that could be selected for this activity include:

- Shelley and Pete discussing birth control.
- Shelley telling Pete that she's pregnant.
- The family discussion over what to do about the pregnancy.
- Pete's discussion with his dad over Pete's role in the business.
- The very last scene in the film: What will Pete and Shelley say to each other?

3. Have the group discuss what they think will eventually happen to Shelley and Pete. The group may wish to develop a scenario entitled "Five Years Later" that will resolve many of the questions left unanswered by SHELLEY & PETE...(& CAROL). Have the students come up with a story line that will tell us the answers to these questions:
   - Are Shelley and Pete still together? If so, what kind of relationship do they have? If Shelley and Pete have broken up, are they separated or divorced? What circumstances led to the break-up?
   - Has their financial situation improved?
   - Is Pete still working for his father? Is Shelley working?
   - Did Shelley ever go back to school? Did Pete ever enroll in college?
   - Did Pete buy a replacement for Crazy Horse? Did he ever get to fulfill his dream of a sailing adventure?
   - Does Shelley ever see any of her old friends, some of whom may now be married? Does she see Donnelle?
   - Are Pete and Cal still close?
   - What are Pete and Shelley's relationships with their parents? How do their parents relate to Carol?
   - What has become of Carol? How has she been affected by Pete and Shelley's relationship with each other? Is Carol a happy child? Does she bring her parents a great deal of happiness? Are they "proud parents"?
   - Have Shelley and Pete had any other children? How do they feel about parenthood now?

Additional information and educational materials on teenage pregnancy and parenthood are available for both educators and teenage groups from this address:

National Clearinghouse for Family Planning Information
P.O. Box 2225
Rockville, Maryland 20852

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ANSWERS

1. **False** While the pregnancy rate is declining for the population as a whole, each year more than 1,000,000 teenagers become pregnant. It has, in fact, been predicted that one in every five 14-year-old girls will become pregnant before she finishes high school.

2. **True** Many teenage mothers become dependent upon welfare because of limited job opportunities and the high costs of child care. In one study done in New York City in 1974, 72 percent of the women who had their first child as a teenager were on welfare.

3. **False** Eighty percent of teenagers who become pregnant at age 17 or younger never complete their schooling.

4. **False** Contrary to what many teenagers believe, having a baby severely limits independence. A great many teenage parents continue to live with one of the spouses' parents. Among unmarried teenage women, studies indicate that at least 80 percent stay with their parents for over a year. Moreover, all teenage parents are limited by their 24 hour-a-day responsibility to their child.

5. **False** The biological immaturity of the teenage mother may often lead to complications during pregnancy that affect the baby's health. Physical and neurological problems in infants have been positively linked to the age of the mother. Moreover, babies born to teenage mothers are twice as likely to die of health problems during their first year as are babies born to mothers in their 20's.

6. **True** It is estimated that 60 percent of all teenage fathers marry the mother of their child. Yet, it is also known that two-thirds of these teenage marriages will probably end in divorce within five years.

7. **False** According to figures from Planned Parenthood Federation of America, two-thirds of the one million pregnancies that occur to teenagers each year are unintended.

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